

VZCZCXRO7799
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #0749/01 1261448
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 061448Z MAY 09
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4785
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0175
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000749

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND NEA/IPA; PRM FOR FRONT OFFICE AND
PRM/ANE; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR; DEPT PLEASE PASS TO USAID
FOR ANE/MEA:MCCLLOUD/BORODIN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN AID ACCESS TO GAZA REMAINS LIMITED

REF: JERUSALEM 360

Summary

1. (SBU) UN and NGO contacts report that movement of humanitarian aid into Gaza continues to face significant obstacles. USAID and NGOs cite increased difficulty in securing access since late February. Despite GOI assurances to the USG in March and an Israeli Cabinet decision that all food would be allowed, some USAID-procured food items and many non-food items continue to face rejection. Although the UN has had some success in bringing in materials for the 2009 Summer Games, the overall quantity and scope of supplies allowed into Gaza is stymieing UN efforts to help Gazans recover livelihoods and rebuild. With the lack of construction materials, Gazans are beginning to reconstruct buildings using sand, clay, water, and rubble. End Summary.

Access to Gaza Remains Severely Limited

2. (SBU) UNRWA and NGO contacts report that access to Gaza slightly deteriorated since February. Israel continues to allow entry for only the most basic humanitarian supplies, such as food, medicine, and hygiene materials. The UN Logistics Cluster reported May 2 that roughly 200 MT of humanitarian relief items, including recreation kits, wheelchairs, toothbrushes, and baby toys, have either received no response from COGAT or have been denied. NGOs working in Gaza express frustration with repeated delays and rejections. Some NGOs are considering local procurement despite the expense -- 2 to 3 times the cost if procured in the West Bank -- and chance that the materials may have been smuggled through the tunnels and taxed by Hamas.

3. (SBU) UNRWA reported May 5 that an average of 80 truckloads per day entered Gaza in April, down from an average of 110 truckloads in February (reftel) and compared to 475 truckloads in April 2007 (pre-Hamas takeover). Of the total commodities in April, 97 percent were food, medicine, and hygiene supplies, most commonly detergent, diapers, and tissue. UNRWA also reported that no petrol or diesel has been allowed into Gaza from Israel since November 2, 2008, although limited, lower-quality supplies are available in the Gaza market due to smuggling. Cooking gas is entering, but only enough to meet 55 percent of the need. No construction materials, including cement, glass or rebar, have entered Gaza. A Mercy Corps shipment of three truckloads of window glass and wooden beams for a shelter rehabilitation project was rejected April 16.

USAID Cites Increased Difficulty

14. (SBU) USAID and NGO contacts both cite increased difficulty in securing access for humanitarian goods since negotiations to free captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit collapsed in late February. For example, on May 4, 24 pallets of fortified wafers and lentils were rejected for reasons related to food packaging. On other occasions, items were approved, but then turned back at Kerem Shalom crossing. For example, the week of April 27, a shipment of cooking oil and halva was approved and coordinated with COGAT, but denied entry at the crossing. After hours of negotiation, USAID convinced the authorities at the crossing to allow it in. USAID also notes that non-food essential items are often denied. For example, 42 pallets of mattresses and floor mats were rejected for reasons that remain unclear, although one COGAT official suggested that the mats were denied because they could be used as prayer mats in mosques.

Isolated Cases of "Other Materials" Entering Gaza

15. (SBU) Non-food, non-medical, and non-hygiene items comprised only three percent of the total commodities allowed into Gaza in April. These materials included plastic pipes for the Palestinian Water Authority and supplies for UNRWA's 2009 Summer Games program, such as clothing, school kits, and spray paint. Other administrative UN requirements, such as printing paper, generators, and vehicle spare parts were also allowed, but these materials were limited to the UN and have not been allowed in for the private sector.

Gazans Use Sand, Rubble, and Water to Re-build

JERUSALEM 00000749 002 OF 002

16. (SBU) UNRWA Deputy Director Aidan O'Leary told RefCoord May 5 that the lack of construction materials in Gaza has motivated local universities to develop a new method of construction using sand, clay, rubble, and water. The Ministry of Public Works in Gaza plans to build a mosque, a school, and a clinic to demonstrate the new method's viability. Meanwhile, Gazans are reconstructing demolished homes using traditional methods of mud and thatch. Photos of the construction were emailed to NEA/IPA and PRM/ANE.
WALLES